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Synthesis of voluntary submissions by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums

Note by the Secretariat

The present document provides a synthesis of the voluntary submissions prepared by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums in response to the invitation by the President of the Council, contained in his letter to the Chairs of those bodies in April 2016, for them to offer substantive inputs to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, highlighting their contributions towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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I. Introduction

1. The present document is based on a synthesis of voluntary submissions by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums in response to the invitation by the President of the Council contained in his letter to the Chairs of those bodies in April 2016.[1]

2. The invitation by the President of the Council is in line with the call in paragraph 85 of General Assembly resolution 70/1, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", for thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals to be held at the high-level political forum on sustainable development. The thematic reviews will be supported by reviews by the functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums. In his letter, the President, the President invited recipients to reflect on the integrated nature of the Goals and to address the theme of the 2016 high-level political forum, "Ensuring that no one is left behind".

3. The invitation by the President of the Council reached 80 intergovernmental bodies, identified through an initial list prepared by the members of the Inter-Agency Technical Assistance Support Team.[2] The list comprises global platforms exclusively; intergovernmental organization-driven mechanisms were added only in the absence of a United Nations-led global process on a specific Sustainable Development Goal or target. The list should be regarded as an evolving tool to be aligned closely with the themes and focus of future sessions of the high-level political forum.

4. While no thematic review was undertaken for the 2016 high-level political forum, the call for input can be instructive in developing the process for thematic reviews in future years. It is envisioned that the thematic review will offer a qualitative analysis that complements the quantitative one contained in the mandated progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals, the Global Sustainable Development Report, which will provide more in-depth analysis and assessments of specific policy issues, with an emphasis on strengthening the science-policy interface.

5. The present report reflects how the functional commissions and expert bodies of the Council and other intergovernmental forums and bodies are responding to the theme of the 2016 high-level political forum and does not suggest a formal reporting link to the forum or modify any entity's mandate or governance.

"Ensuring that no one is left behind": the cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda

6. The commissions, platforms and other bodies that submitted inputs reflected on the theme of the 2016 high-level political forum.[3] The theme provides very broad

[1] See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10071Letter%20ECOSOC%20%20Pres_Functional%20Commissions.pdf.

[2] The Inter-Agency Technical Assistance Support Team prepared the list in 2014 in response to a request by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The list has since evolved to respond to various needs and demands and is available from: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5459Tentative%20list%20of%20review%20and%20coordination%20platforms.pdf.

[3] The full text of the submissions received and synthesized in the present report are available from: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/inputs.

guidance and is subject to many interpretations, but is grounded in specific concepts. All people are at the centre of the 2030 Agenda and their well-being and ability to live safe, full and fulfilling lives are its animating force. No individual or group can be excluded or allowed to fall behind because of who they are or where they live. Furthermore, leaving no one behind goes beyond the national level and is a consequence of globalization and the interdependence of countries. For example, pressure is sometimes exerted on wages and labour standards through value chains, downstream environmental degradation and pollution and the transfer of financial and other resources away from the locations where they can most effectively help to ensure that no one is left behind. As the Secretary-General stated in his synthesis report on the post-2015 development agenda (A/69/700), "None of today's threats respect boundaries drawn by human beings, whether those boundaries are national borders or boundaries of class, ability, age, gender, geography, ethnicity, or religion". The threats are inclusive and so must the solutions be. The submissions considered in the present report take this commitment to heart.

7. Depending on their mandates and priorities, the commissions, platforms and other bodies used their inputs to address the theme from different angles, with some reflecting generally on cross-cutting approaches and concepts in general and others focusing on a specific Sustainable Development Goal or sectoral area. The cross-cutting concepts addressed in section II of the present report provide a framework to discuss proposals and policy recommendations of the high-level political forum contained in the inputs. Section III contains a number of the sectoral priority areas that the commissions, platforms and other bodies treated in their inputs in order to give the reader a sense of the scope and depth of the work that these entities are undertaking to move the 2030 Agenda forward.

II. Today's unequal world

8. Although the commissions, platforms and other bodies adopted different approaches to the theme of the 2016 high-level political forum, they began by addressing the current problem, namely, that nearly 1 billion people are left behind.

9. Some 1 billion people in developing countries live in extreme poverty, with two thirds of them living in rural areas. Millions of people are chronically undernourished owing to land degradation, declining soil fertility, unsustainable water use, drought and loss of biodiversity. The poorest and hungriest people worldwide are most vulnerable to external factors and shocks, including excessive commodity price volatility, climate change and a shift in trade policies and flows.

10. While the extraordinary growth and progress that the world has witnessed over the past decades has resulted in a significant reduction in extreme poverty and other forms of deprivation, economic growth has not been sufficiently inclusive. Overall, growth has been accompanied by widening inequalities within and among countries. For instance, notwithstanding their increased economic growth and participation in global trade since the turn of the millennium, least developed countries have made only limited and uneven progress in dynamically transforming and diversifying their economies.

11. In addition, many women, men and children continue to live on the margins of society, whether in rural areas or in cities. They lack access to infrastructure, resources and information, are excluded from decision-making and face

discrimination. Various factors hinder access by the poorest and most vulnerable to public services, including discrimination, affordability, geographical distance, physical environment, language, culture, a lack of accommodation for physical and mental disabilities and a lack of access to digital and other technologies. National, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities continue to experience deep inequalities, while many migrants face significant discrimination, a lack of opportunity, exploitation, forcible displacement and even death. These inequalities threaten social cohesion, radicalize groups and create tensions, which can, in turn, engender crime and violence, political unrest and conflict. Development in this context, by definition, leaves many behind.

12. Rapid population growth is occurring mostly in countries facing the greatest challenges in ending poverty and hunger and ensuring health, education and equality for all. The benefits and challenges of an ageing population will affect all countries eventually, raising concerns about the ability to provide care and support for increasing numbers of older persons. Furthermore, the increasing concentration of human populations in cities and urban settlements translates into a need for better planning that is sensitive to the needs of the poor and takes into consideration environmental risks. For example, high population growth in the poorest countries can exacerbate the situation of people already left behind if meeting their needs is not prioritized. Cleaner cooking stoves serve as one example. Some 4.3 million people die prematurely annually from illnesses attributable to the household air pollution caused by the inefficient use of solid fuels for cooking. This presents enormous challenges to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3, target 3.4.

13. There is a need for economic growth that reduces poverty and inequality and creates decent work for the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society, including young people, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons, migrants and slum dwellers. Quality education, universal health care and a commitment to enhancing gender equality will help to shape an inclusive and supportive society in which sustainable development can be a viable path.

14. The pledge to leave no one behind extends to future generations and to the planet that they will inherit. This means that inclusive development must include a strong environmental component. Human activity is gravely threatening the world's climate, terrestrial ecosystems and oceans. Many economic and consumer values that served parts of society well in previous generations are no longer an option. The current rates of population increase and economic growth mean that the paradigm must shift in order to enable inclusive sustainable development.

A. High-level political forum: an apex platform for the 2030 Agenda

15. The inputs synthesized in the present report emphasize that the high-level political forum, as the apex platform for the review of and follow-up to the Sustainable Development Goals, will need to highlight cross-cutting elements of the 2030 Agenda and showcase specific policy recommendations that will ensure that no one is left behind. While a range of sectoral issues and individual Goals will be addressed in the sessions, the theme allows for the discussions and perspectives, as well as the policy recommendations that emerge, to share an emphasis on addressing inequality, taking a human rights approach, building good governance and peaceful

societies, incorporating all knowledge systems and traditions, promoting national and local policies that advance inclusive development and building data capacity.

Addressing inequality

16. It is very clearly stated in the 2030 Agenda that inequality among groups of people and among countries is not compatible with achieving the future we want. The quest for equality is at the heart of the theme of the high-level political forum and many of the inputs presented ways to move towards equality in a variety of contexts. Respondents noted that the forum should promote concrete policies and approaches that help to create a more equitable global community. Proposed focus areas that will help to ensure that no one is left behind include:

(a) Identifying those at risk of being left behind through consultations with all levels of government and all segments of civil society;

(b) A universal approach to social policy, including social protection floors, that is complemented by targeted measures to meet the special needs of those left far behind;

(c) Policies to promote economic growth and measures to encourage the equitable distribution of the benefits of such growth, including through progressive tax systems and collection;

(d) Policies to promote gender equality, including affirmative-action measures and quota systems. The multiplier effect of gender equality is well known, given that increasing women's access to land, livestock, education, financial services, technology and rural employment would boost their productivity and generate gains in agricultural output, food security, economic growth and social welfare;

(e) Preferential market access for least developed countries and targeting those most in need through "aide for trade";

(f) Expanding the productive capacity of least developed countries, complementing national-level efforts;

(g) Maintaining levels of official development assistance and providing countries in special situations with additional attention and support;

(h) Policies to promote equality in food security and fisheries management;

(i) Policies that level the information and communications technology (ICT) playing field through the regulatory environment and open-access approaches to publicly funded infrastructure;

(j) Expanded technical and vocational education and training, life-long learning programmes, universal preprimary education and others. The emphasis should be not only on access to education, but also on access to quality education for all, given that quality education is a profound driver of equality;

(k) Promoting young entrepreneurs, women-owned businesses and small and medium-sized enterprises in general, and working to close the productivity gap of those enterprises;

(l) Capacity-building to share information about sustainability requirements and standards and certification processes in order to enhance market access;

(m) Promoting public-private partnerships, including those involving small and medium-sized enterprises, and creating an enabling environment for trade and productive capacity.

Human rights-based approach

17. The concept of "leaving no one behind" is a human rights objective. No Sustainable Development Goal will be considered to have been met if any person, country or region has been unable to take advantage of the progress and opportunities that a successful achievement of that Goal would bring. People's human rights are undermined by a host of factors, including de jure or de facto inequality based on, among other things, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, linguistic identity, economic status or employment. The high-level political forum should make a strong statement in support of creating a more equal world that respects human rights and dignity.

18. International human rights law places core obligations on States, including extraterritorial obligations, to ensure that the minimum essential levels of all economic, social and cultural rights are upheld as much as possible, even during times of crisis and recovery. The high-level political forum could promote policy actions that work to ensure that no one is left behind by addressing the following:

(a) Codification of the requirement that national and subnational governments should be required to review any legislation, policy or practice to ensure that it does not have a discriminatory or disproportionately negative effect on persons belonging to a minority or group that traditionally faces discrimination. Notions of direct and indirect discrimination should be addressed adequately;

(b) Full, effective and equal participation of all citizens in political and public affairs, including by eliminating laws, regulations and practices that discriminate directly or indirectly;

(c) Rights, perspectives and well-being of persons with disabilities should be considered in all international, regional and national development efforts, and persons with disabilities and their representative organizations must be involved in all stages of policy and programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;

(d) Policies that ensure access to formal justice for a minority or group traditionally facing discrimination;

(e) Policies that ensure that the benefits of development and humanitarian relief programmes are distributed equally;

(f) Policies that address issues of accessibility for people with disabilities to social, economic and judicial services and those that integrate people with disabilities into all stages of policy and programme design and implementation. A standing forum on disability and development could be created within the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council or the General Assembly;

(g) Policies that protect marginalized groups against human rights abuses linked to transnational businesses and other enterprises and policies aimed at eradicating forced labour, child labour and human trafficking;

(h) Policies that reflect the Human Rights Council's guiding principles on foreign debt and human rights.

19. The universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council is another important avenue through which the Council could contribute to the thematic and country reviews of the high-level political forum.

Building good governance

20. Effective and transparent governance arrangements can provide institutional safeguards for inclusive development, and the high-level political forum can provide a platform for the exchange of successful approaches and challenges encountered. The rule of law and access to the formal justice system are crucial to combating inequalities and discrimination. The 2030 Agenda requires effective governance arrangements with regard to issues ranging from protecting human health to protecting biodiversity.

21. Governments, parliaments and the judiciary should enhance efforts to ensure that public administrations are held accountable for the impact of their work, including on the poorest and most vulnerable. The high-level political forum could therefore host a network platform in which the least developed countries express their capacity-building needs, and potential partners make offers of support.

Peaceful societies

22. Civil unrest and armed conflict destroy the possibility of sustainable development and undermine all attempts to leave no one behind. Forests, oceans, food security and cultural heritage are threatened by armed conflict. The high-level political forum should highlight conflict management and negotiations aimed at ending conflicts and civil unrest.

23. In addition, the high-level political forum could highlight:

(a) Ways to combat crime and violence in societies, including some forms of violence, such as female genital mutilation and so-called honour killings, that may be seen as acceptable to some and that prevent their victims from participating in any true development progress;

(b) The fact that children involved in the judicial system as witnesses, victims or offenders should receive child-sensitive treatment;

(c) The urgency of combating wildlife trafficking, which is often rooted in crime and violence.

Respecting and incorporating knowledge systems

24. Local and traditional knowledge has much to offer to the global community and is an important source of innovative solutions to advance the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In order to ensure that no one is left behind, the perspectives and expertise of all communities, including indigenous peoples and those living in rural areas, must be incorporated. In food production, fisheries, forest management, water management, building climate resilience and livelihoods and other areas of the Goals, traditional knowledge can complement the physical sciences and data-driven approaches. In today's globalized world, small-scale fishers, farmers and business people need opportunities to build skills adapted to the

new globalized reality without losing the strengths and the identity of their culture and traditions.

25. The management of genetic and biodiversity resources, in particular, must incorporate the traditional knowledge of the indigenous and local communities that have traditionally had oversight of these resources. Equitable governance and collaborative management structures arising from local and indigenous traditions can also be incorporated into sustainable development plans and strategies. In the context of the World Heritage Sites, for example, indigenous people and local communities have an important role to play, recognizing both universal and local values.

26. Traditional and indigenous knowledge can provide significant lessons for attaining a land degradation-neutral world, moving from a "degrade-abandon-migrate" paradigm to one that reflects "protect-sustain-restore". Such a shift will help to engender equity for future generations.

Policies at the national and local levels that will help to ensure that no one is left behind

27. Until the 2030 Agenda is adapted to and implemented at the national and local levels, it remains only an abstract declaration of good intentions. Member States and their subnational authorities have made it clear that this process has two aspects: (a) adapting the Sustainable Development Goals to existing national and local sustainable development strategies and plans; and (b) adapting existing strategies and plans to the new agenda. In the context of the Goals, it is important that countries assign responsibility for their implementation to a ministry or office with significant authority and resources, such as the office of the head of Government or an independent national authority.

28. The high-level political forum could call attention to efforts among local authorities to develop "local 2030 Agendas" that place a special focus on ensuring that no one is left behind and that are supported by commensurate means of implementation, including capacity-building and the enhanced ability to mobilize resources, with responsibilities devolved incrementally, so that a lack of capacity does not stall implementation. Community-driven development should also be encouraged.

Need to build data capacity

29. The international community will know who is left behind and who is at risk only if progress can be accurately and transparently measured and assessed. Accordingly, high-quality comprehensive and disaggregated data are required across all sectoral areas covered by the Sustainable Development Goals. Developing and developed countries have indicated that they lack the data and statistics needed to track the full set of the Goals' indicators. For instance, an estimated 53 per cent of deaths globally are not registered owing to the absence of systems to capture civil registration and vital statistics. Adequate labour market information is lacking in many countries, especially in least developed countries. Furthermore, there is a shortfall in data on oceans and in many other areas. The situation in some developing countries is particularly urgent.

30. The high-level political forum will have an important role to play in highlighting effective approaches to data collection and analysis, in promoting policies guiding data and statistics issues and in forging partnerships for building data capacity and addressing gaps. It could highlight, in particular, the need for:

(a) Adoption of open-data policies, enabling the dissemination of public-use, geo-reference and anonymized microdata from various sources;

(b) Leveraging new data sources, including "big data", and technology to improve data collection;

(c) Promoting collaborative work by Governments, international organizations and others to assist developing countries in strengthening their data capacity;

(d) Enhanced data in food security issues;

(e) Strengthening data-responsive collection and analysis;

(f) Increased investments in labour market information and analysis capacities;

(g) Rationalizing the reporting requirements currently mandated by resolutions on a range of individual United Nations system organizations;

(h) Global and regional mechanisms to collect ocean data in the high seas and for international cooperation in marine research and observation.

III. Sectoral issues crucial to inclusive development: gaps and challenges, lessons learned and emerging issues

31. The integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals gives the 2030 Agenda its transformational potential and may make it a game-changer for the more than 1 billion people currently left in the shadows of global development.

32. To capitalize on the 2030 Agenda's integrated approach, the high-level political forum should look holistically at nexus issues, such as food and water, energy and water, and oceans and livelihoods. It should promote policies that enhance coordination in the management of forests, agriculture, food, land use and rural development, for example, and that promote a holistic approach to addressing food insecurity, malnutrition and unsustainable agriculture, climate change and other challenges.

33. The high-level political forum should prioritize approaches and policies that break down silos, both in institutional arrangements and in conceptualizing the problems and opportunities facing national and subnational governments. Economic growth must essentially be decoupled from environmental degradation, and poverty eradication and social inclusion must underpin all development efforts. The forum should promote innovative policies that combine these three elements of sustainable development in ways that promote equity and peace and maximize personal development and happiness.

34. Although the 2030 Agenda as a whole will be best implemented in an integrated and holistic way, individual sectoral issues will require ongoing attention to ensure that no one is left behind in the present generation or in future ones.

Gender equality

35. Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is crucial to making progress across all Sustainable Development Goals and targets. Therefore, the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to ensuring that no one is left behind. National institutional arrangements tasked with guiding the work towards achieving all the Goals and targets should be enhanced to ensure that planning, decision-making, policy action, budgeting and monitoring reflect gender equality considerations and benefit all women and girls. National mechanisms for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls need to be an integral part of such national institutional arrangements and need to be strengthened and supported to influence their implementation across all policy areas.

36. Combating discrimination and violence against women requires a strong partnership between international and national institutions and civil society organizations. Enabling their work, including by ensuring their meaningful, open, inclusive and transparent engagement in the development and monitoring of relevant policies and programmes, should be a priority. Fully engaging men and boys as agents and beneficiaries of change in attaining gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and in becoming allies in the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls is also vital.

Addressing climate change

37. The 2030 Agenda recognizes climate change as a cross-cutting issue, affecting everything from food security to economic growth to peace and security. Its implementation will depend on effective actions to address climate change, while implementation of the historic Paris Agreement will, in turn, depend on the holistic approach to sustainable development described in the 2030 Agenda. Individuals, communities and countries will be left behind if aggressive and innovative climate change mitigation and adaptation actions are not taken. The high-level political forum should therefore highlight the links between addressing climate change and safeguarding not only the physical environment, but also human rights and social development.

38. The high-level political forum could provide valuable guidance on how to effectively align climate objectives with the broader sustainable development objectives and thereby deepen national buy-in. It will also be important for the forum to inject a sense of urgency into making progress on the response to climate change, given the pivotal importance of the next five years and of the urgent need to build resilience to the adverse impacts of climate change. In doing so, the forum could consider how best to promote readiness, including through the Copenhagen Green Climate Fund and related channels, and help countries to accelerate a transition to low-emission and climate-resilient development.

39. The impacts of climate change are already beginning to affect economic development in the most vulnerable countries and vulnerable populations within countries. The resilience of these economies to the adverse impacts of climate change can be built through adaptation policies, investments and disaster risk-reduction efforts.

40. There is an urgent need to assist vulnerable countries in accelerating their transition towards low-emission development pathways, given the multiple economic benefits flowing from such a transition. They should not be left behind in the fossil fuel-based economies of the past. Investments are also needed to build technical and scientific capabilities, such as observation networks, training and effective early warning systems.

Food security

41. Smallholders and family farmers are among the most susceptible to food insecurity and shocks of various kinds, but they are also central to attaining global food security. Connecting smallholders to markets, addressing land degradation, assessing the impact of rural transformation and urbanization on food security and nutrition and advancing sustainable agricultural development are areas requiring urgent attention. In addition, nutrition in changing food systems, livestock systems, socioeconomic inequality, the role of financial markets and pathways to sustainable food systems are emerging issues for food security and nutrition.

42. There is also a need to mainstream nutrition into all agricultural development policies and strategies at the national and regional levels. Policy coherence is also needed at these levels to mainstream climate change adaptation and mitigation principles into agricultural development programmes.

43. Food security is tied closely to issues of genetic diversity, peoples' livelihoods and lifestyles and production systems. Drivers of biodiversity loss are often linked to changes in production systems, such as agricultural intensification or land-use changes. Because many smallholders, especially mobile groups such as pastoralists, depend on common property resources for their livelihoods, access restrictions may lead to their marginalization.

44. Cross-boundary and cross-disciplinary efforts are necessary in order to make safe and nutritious food accessible to everyone. Standards, testing and methods of analysis may be beyond the reach of developing countries, which places them at risk of being left behind. Implementing tailored capacity-building programmes at the national, subregional and regional levels has been shown to lead to more effective and more harmonized norm-setting at the international and national levels.

45. Some additional issues to be considered in an integrated manner include.

(a) Food waste and its effects on malnutrition and food safety;

(b) Technological developments in the area of food safety. Food inspection, control and certification systems are likely to become more technological in developed countries, which poses the risk of creating an uneven playing field for trade and competitiveness;

(c) In many places, vulnerable populations also face issues relating to the poor governance of land and water tenure and risks associated with the loss of agricultural assets;

(d) Barriers and challenges at the technical level, such as a lack of knowledge of integrated approaches among farmers and extension agents, and at the policy level (for example, policies relating to production and access to natural resources and markets, are often focused on increasing production for global markets, with insufficient attention given to the impact on ecosystem services and

nutrition) can affect taking integrated approaches to crop production and diversification;

(e) Urbanization and climate change are two drivers that will require a retooling of food producers and regulators in order to continue to provide food for all;

(f) Malnutrition in all its forms has overtaken hunger in terms of the numbers of people affected worldwide. Malnutrition is linked closely to inequality and the sustainability of food systems and has complex political, economic, social and environmental factors involved in combating it;

(g) Rapid urbanization and the transformation of rural spaces are creating challenges and opportunities in relation to food security and nutrition;

(h) The agriculture sector is underperforming in many developing countries, in part because men and women do not have equal access to the resources and opportunities that they need in order to be productive;

(i) Commodity price volatility and, in particular, the extent to which food stocks could be used to reduce price volatility and stabilize markets;

(j) Market transparency and policy coordination; trade policy and the global trading system; agricultural investment in the context of long-term commodity price trends; climate change and its effects on commodity markets and trade flows; and the integration of smallholders and family farmers into markets and value chains.

Health

46. To ensure socially inclusive development, the health sector needs to strengthen its capacity to enhance data and statistics, increase access to quality care, support the role of caregiving, eliminate harmful practices, combat violence against women and introduce gender-sensitive policies. Reinforcing key health system functions in the improved management of environmental determinants, such as water and sanitation, disease surveillance and the preparedness for and response to extreme weather events can avert some of the potential burdens to health systems and economic progress. There is a strong relationship between the status of women and their education and health outcomes for the whole family and community.

47. Air pollution has been identified as the world's greatest environmental risk to health. The lack of access to clean water and sanitation also reveals environmental factors that affect human well-being to a large extent. Exposure to waste and chemicals represents another environmental area requiring further attention. The degradation of ecosystems also presents important links to human well-being, with such degradation resulting in major health-related consequences.

48. With regard to health systems, the fragmentation of national ones is of great concern. The situation is exacerbated when each programme produces a separate estimate of financial needs, geared primarily to advocacy rather than accurate budgeting. Addressing health system weaknesses is of the utmost importance. Access to services is low for rural populations and the poor, and management inefficiencies account for the substandard delivery of care. Health financing, inadequate human resources, the inadequate investment in research and development, inadequate medical products, the lack of health system resilience and

inadequate information and accountability are significant weaknesses that prevent access to quality health services.

Education

49. Education is one of the most important drivers of equality. In many cases, a quality education means the difference between joining the forward momentum of development or being left behind.

50. Nevertheless, education is not a priority in many national budgets. Pre-primary education and adult literacy, in particular, remain substantially underfunded by both Governments and donors. In addition, educational resources, such as textbooks and teachers, tend to be concentrated in wealthy, urban areas and schools. The quality of education often varies and tends to reproduce structures of marginalization and discrimination. This situation is further exacerbated by the growth of private and fee-charging schools, effectively excluding those who cannot pay. Gender equality in education requires urgent attention. Greater national and global efforts are needed to bridge the gaps in measuring equity and inclusion and quality and learning outcomes.

51. The educational opportunities for children and young people are increasingly destroyed by conflict, epidemics and natural disaster. Many of the most significant gaps in education are found in conflict and emergency situations. It is crucial to maintain education during emergency, conflict, post-conflict and post-disaster situations and to meet the educational needs of internally displaced persons and refugees.

52. Ensuring equitable progress in education is vital if no one is to be left behind, as the following lessons learned demonstrate:

(a) Education is critical to enabling an escape from chronic poverty. For some people, poverty is transitory, but more vulnerable individuals remain poor for long periods of time, passing on their poverty to their children;

(b) Education is a health intervention. Educated people are better informed about specific diseases, take measures to prevent them or act on early signs and tend to seek out and use health-care services more frequently and more effectively;

(c) Education can be part of a social transformation process involving men, women, boys and girls towards developing a more gender-just society;

(d) High-quality education enables people to make informed judgments about issues that concern them and to engage constructively in national and local political debates;

(e) By abolishing tuition fees at the primary school level, countries were able to increase enrolment rates and reach groups that had been excluded;

(f) Teachers play a critical role. Their training, equitable allocation in urban, rural and other underserved communities, professional development, remuneration, engagement in social dialogue and support are essential.

Water and sanitation

53. Striking inequalities are evident with regard to water, showing that half of humanity is still left behind. Access to basic sanitation is recognized as a key

challenge in the twenty-first century. Global indicators to monitor the evacuation and treatment of wastewater and excreta are not in place. By 2025, two thirds of the world's population is expected to live in water-stressed regions owing to climate change, inefficient water distribution and its use and over-use by the agriculture, energy and other sectors. Global water withdrawals have tripled over the past 50 years. The scientific information available shows that water demands may reach "planetary boundaries" in the coming decades. There is therefore an urgent need for more sustainable water use and improved cooperation and synergies between sectors.

54. The gaps, priority areas of actions, risks and challenges with regard to water include the following:

(a) Capacity in terms of human resources, expertise and infrastructure remains a major challenge, and funds assigned for training by Governments, water utility companies and funding institutions are insufficient;

(b) Improvements are required in the efficiency of water-energy systems across sectors to cope with the increasing demand on water and energy;

(c) Sustainable planning, building and operating of water and energy infrastructure, while preserving and improving water resources, the ecosystems that they support and social aspects;

(d) Stakeholders across sectors should be empowered to participate in decision-making, cooperate and share information to foster resources and maximize the sharing of benefits;

(e) Water pollution and pollution caused by energy production can jeopardize local residents' health and undermine companies' reputations;

(f) Water-related responsibilities are fragmented across authorities and levels of government, which raises the question of vertical and horizontal coordination for the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals relating to water.

55. Transboundary cooperation overall in the pan-European region has improved; notably, during the past two decades the cooperation between its western and eastern parts has developed and intensified, contributing to a reduction in the potential for conflict and friction. Experience shows that water can be an element of cooperation, despite tensions in other areas.

56. In recent years, water is increasingly used as a weapon in conflicts, including by terrorists. Given that access to water and sanitation is recognized as a human right, such manipulation of water is unacceptable.

57. Water pollution is also increasing in many parts of the world owing to economic development, discharges of untreated or insufficiently treated wastewater, intensive agriculture (diffuse pollution), mining and new micropollutants, such as antibiotics, placing downstream populations that are dependent on water at risk.

Migration

58. Resettlement is a vital international protection tool and a durable solution for the most vulnerable populations. The context in which resettlement takes place is becoming increasingly fraught. Sound border management is critical to ensuring the

security of countries and the safety and dignity of migrants, as well as facilitating trade and the movement of cross-border communities.

59. A key lesson learned is that the origins and causes of migration are so complex that one-dimensional migration policies, such as those focusing on security aspects without substantive collaboration, are likely to be ineffective. Countries frequently have well-managed migration policies in which a body in their Government deals directly with migration and ensures that migration is mainstreamed across different ministries, that migrants are not left behind and that, with policies to protect their basic human rights, migrants can be agents of development. In addition, migration issues cannot be addressed solely in quantitative terms. It is therefore extremely important to take into consideration the qualitative context in which the migrant finds himself or herself.

Heritage

60. Unfortunately, most countries have not yet developed policies and programmes to integrate a sustainable development perspective into their heritage management strategies, with a specific focus on the most vulnerable groups within society. Cultural and natural heritage are increasingly exposed to a variety of threats, including insensitive development, natural hazards and conflicts, which are progressively eroding this irreplaceable asset and compromising its potential to contribute to sustainable development.

61. Cultural and natural heritage have played a critical role in supporting the poorest and most vulnerable groups in developing countries. Examples include a rise in income and employment at many World Heritage Sites associated with sustainable tourism initiatives and political stability, but also the strengthening of the resilience of communities to disasters through the maintenance of ecosystems. Key lessons learned include the inherent ability of heritage to ensure ownership and participation in development processes and to facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding among diverse groups within society.

Chemicals

62. The enhancement of synergies within the chemicals and waste regime means that capacity, expertise and resources have been pooled. The fact that the Conferences of the Parties of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, meet has increased the capacity and expertise of developing countries to participate, reduced transaction costs and facilitated the adoption of coherent guidance across the three conventions.

63. The high-level political forum could highlight a specific area of concern, namely, the lack of political consensus for a number of chemicals, even after clear scientific guidance on the part of the Chemical Review Committee. The lack of consensus has resulted in:

(a) Limiting support for many developing countries and countries with economies in transition that lack national infrastructures and the capacity to assess and manage the risks posed by widely produced and traded hazardous chemicals;

(b) Increased vulnerability of those countries to the potential risks that hazardous chemicals and pesticides pose to the environment, human health and wildlife;

(c) Lack of support for the development of risk-management strategies to chemicals recommended by the Chemical Review Committee for listing, including a number of other listed chemicals;

(d) Insufficient participation of industry in the development and availability of alternatives, although listing does not lead to an effective ban under the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade.

64. Moreover, there are gaps in the international chemicals and waste regime that require urgent attention. Developing countries are not yet sufficiently protected against the risks and threats of heavy metals, which pose a challenge for many countries, given that the risks of new chemicals and technologies are not yet fully understood.

Industrialization

65. Because available resources are expected to continue to fall short of development needs, private investment, development finance and export earnings remain, by far, the greatest potential sources of funding for long-term industrial development and economic growth. In this context, increased national resource mobilization efforts, on the basis of fostering a favourable business environment in which the private sector can thrive and actively engage, will be central to strengthening the financial capacity of developing countries. Tailored regulatory and incentive frameworks that enable the alignment of commercial interests with environmental and social aspirations will present both a challenge and an opportunity for Governments in designing and implementing eco-industrial policies.

66. The effective mobilization of multi-stakeholder partnerships is central to the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals. Available data show strong linkages between manufacturing and lower levels of poverty, better income distribution and better human development rankings. The larger the share of high-tech industries, the greater the positive impact that industrialization will have on social inclusiveness in terms of job creation, income equality and broader social development. Against a backdrop of growing employment in the informal sector, there is an urgent need to support the creation of decent jobs for those unemployed, inactive or outside formal training or education.

67. Harnessing clean technologies, promoting technology transfer and innovation, diversifying funding and facilitating partnerships for climate-resilient development are key to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Given that rapid urban growth is occurring mainly in developing countries, industry plays an important role as a decent job creator. Industry therefore has the great potential to promote inclusiveness in cities. Smart growth strategies that foster special economic and industrial zones and cities, research hubs and industrial estates enable the pooling of resources for economic growth while mitigating environmental degradation in urban settings. An inclusive and sustainable approach to industrial policy can contribute to disaster risk reduction efforts by strengthening economic and environmental resilience and human security, building institutions and providing sustainable energy for the poor.

Oceans

68. Our knowledge of the oceans is sparse, and many developing nations still lack the basic scientific infrastructure, human skills and technological advancement needed to derive benefits from the oceans in a sustainable way. Global intergovernmental cooperation is required to fill knowledge gaps and build the capacity of developing nations, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States. To provide the technology needed in order to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, knowing the actual demands and disparity in capacity is indispensable.

69. Many small-scale fishing communities continue to be marginalized and left behind, in particular communities of indigenous people and ethnic minorities. Furthermore, the development of the fisheries sector over the past three or four decades has, in many cases worldwide, led to the overexploitation of resources and threats to habitats and ecosystems. Small-scale fishing communities also commonly suffer from unequal power relations owing to conflicts and competition with large-scale fisheries and other sectors. Pollution, environmental degradation, climate change impacts and natural and human-induced disasters add to the threats facing small-scale fishing communities.

70. Valuable lessons learned with regard to fisheries include:

(a) Formal integration of small-scale fisheries into rural development policies;

(b) Adoption of inclusive and participatory approaches, the promotion of cross-sectoral linkages and fostering an environment that promotes collaboration and conflict-resolution mechanisms among stakeholders;

(c) Promotion of gender equality, the integration of gender concerns and perspectives and the empowerment of women;

(d) Equal consideration given to environmental, resource and community rights and sustainability and the promotion of comanagement and community-based management arrangements, including for marine reserves and protection areas that are informed by a precautionary approach;

(e) Use of a wide range of information for decision-making, including bioecological, social and economic data, from scientific, local and traditional sources;

(f) Respect for cultures, existing forms of organization, traditions, local norms and practices, as well as the customary or otherwise preferential access to fishery resources, land and territories by small-scale fishing communities, including indigenous peoples;

(g) Assurance that policies and interventions on disaster risk reduction and management and climate change adaptation respond to the specific needs of small-scale fisheries, recognizing that special considerations must be given to fishing communities living on small islands that are particularly vulnerable to disasters and climate change.

71. Vulnerability to climate change and ocean-related disasters, on the coast and inland, can be reduced through sustainable development practices leading to increased resiliency and the development of effective early warning systems

including for the oceans on multiple timescales. Integrated ecosystem approaches and the diversification of livelihoods and enterprise can improve sustainable development in the three pillars by providing the benefits of increased productivity and the resilience of living marine resources, which can lead to increased incomes and reducing the vulnerability of the coastal poor.

72. There is also need to conserve nature, especially ecologically and biologically sensitive areas, in the context of the multi-use planning of ocean space. Private sector use of the oceans is expanding rapidly, which has an increasingly global impact on the marine environment. Given that industry is the primary user of the oceans, it is well placed to develop and implement solutions in response to society's increasing demand that marine ecosystem use be sustainable and that is impacts be reduced. Developing public-private partnerships could be a good way to find solutions to these impacts and improve the collection of ocean data.

Forests

73. It is widely recognized that most of the challenges facing forests come from outside the sector and that appropriate responses require coordinated approaches across sectors. Achieving the closely interdependent Sustainable Development Goals will require looking at sustainability issues within and across the agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors in an integrated manner, taking into account trade-offs and synergies across sectors and sustainability dimensions.

74. Forests are able to deliver multiple benefits only if managed sustainably and in an integrated manner. Other key lessons learned are the following:

(a) Forests are more than trees. They are fundamental to food security and improved livelihoods and contribute to increasing the resilience of communities;

(b) Integrated approaches to land use provide a way forward for improving policies and practices to address the drivers of deforestation, address conflicts over land use, capitalize on the full range of economic, social and environmental benefits of integrating forests with agriculture and maintain multiple forest services in the landscape context;

(c) Forests are an essential solution to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Sustainably managed forests will increase the resilience of ecosystems and societies and optimize the role of forests and trees in absorbing and storing carbon, while also providing other environmental services;

(d) New partnerships are needed among the forest, agriculture, finance, energy, water and other sectors, as is engagement with indigenous peoples and local communities;

(e) More investment is needed in forest education, communications, capacity-building, research, including the impact of climate change on forest health and diseases, and the creation of jobs, especially for young people.

75. The following factors may have a considerable impact on forests: population growth; the increasing demand for land for food production and infrastructure; growing urbanization; the growing demand for energy; the impact of environmental deterioration, including climate change; biodiversity loss; water scarcity and desertification; human-induced calamities, such as wildfires; unsustainable and illegal management practices; civil unrest and armed conflicts; unsecure ownership

and tenure rights; weak legal and governance systems; and a lack of stakeholder involvement.

Desertification

76. The world is encountering unprecedented rates of land degradation and ecosystem loss. Arable land is being lost at 30 to 35 times the historical rate. Drought and desertification are on the rise as a result of extreme weather events and unsustainable land use. Some 22 per cent of animal species are at risk of extinction because of habitat destruction. Land degradation severely constrains agricultural productivity and threatens food security and land-based livelihoods, with particularly serious consequences for the livelihoods of rural dwellers in the more marginal agricultural areas. Human-induced land use change has also caused devastating economic losses.

77. Communities living on degraded land are likely to migrate in the event that the land is no longer productive. Land abandonment is expected to drive further unplanned urbanization, as rural people move to the cities, or resource competition and conflict, as individuals or communities move to land already occupied.

78. Efforts to restore and manage our land resources more sustainably will require investment, enabling policies and incentives and multi-sectoral land use planning. The multidimensional scale and aspects of land management call for more coordination and cooperation in planning and decision-making among different government agencies, especially those responsible for agriculture, livestock, forestry, land and water resources, the environment, science and technology, finance, planning, legislation and tourism.

Economic growth

79. The main driver of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth is the transformation of low productivity and poorly rewarded work into higher productivity and decent jobs. Against this backdrop, the slow pace with which decent work opportunities are currently created in most parts of the world represents a major shortcoming, in particular in countries where rural poverty is high and informal economies are large.

80. The creation of a macroeconomic environment conducive to job creation and to formalization should be a matter of the utmost importance. The informal economy absorbs more than half of the global workforce and includes more than 90 per cent of small and medium-sized enterprises. As a result, millions of workers and economic units worldwide suffer from poor working conditions and a lack of labour rights. Low-quality employment, inadequate social protection, poor governance and low productivity are some of the obstacles that workers and enterprises face when caught in the informality trap. Steps towards enhancing collaborative approaches and partnerships to tackle the challenge of increasing the employment of young people are also needed.

81. Women continue to face major barriers to equality in the world of work. In many countries, employment participation and earnings are much lower for women than for men. Weak growth in both the quality and quantity of jobs also interferes with efforts to ensure labour market access for a wide range of vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities and migrant workers. The extension of social

protection floors and the eradication of child labour and forced labour should be considered core priorities, along with the protection of workers' rights and the promotion of healthy and safe work environments.

82. The respect for fundamental labour principles and rights is essential for an integrated approach to leaving no one behind. Social dialogue among Governments and employers' and workers' organizations is an extremely valuable mechanism to identify the barriers to sustainable development and the policies and programmes needed to overcome them.

Trade

83. Successive food price spikes in recent years have highlighted the vulnerability of international markets to supply and demand shocks and focused analytical attention on the relationship between stocks and prices. In addition to the issue of price volatility, other areas that require greater attention include market transparency and policy coordination; trade policy and the global trading system; agricultural investment in the context of long-term commodity price trends; climate change and its effects on commodity markets and trade flows; and the integration of smallholders and family farmers into markets and value chains.

84. Small and medium-sized enterprises need to diversify exports to be included in global value chains and attain inclusive economic growth, as well as spread gains across all strata of society by promoting such enterprises by women and young people. There is also a need to overcome the obstacles that hinder their inclusion in global value chains, such as the ability to meet buyers and receive information about sustainability requirements, standards, certification processes and overall market access conditions.

Telecommunications

85. Information and communications technologies can enhance education, reduce youth unemployment and promote social and economic development. The rising cost of providing even basic ICT services means that universal service has become more expensive to realize. Soft measures encouraging the private sector to become ICT accessible are not going to produce all the expected results; mandatory legislation is also required. Efforts to address the gender digital divide, ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and ICT applications to deliver a wide range of basic services in remote and rural areas will be critical to ensuring that no one is left behind.